For the Love of God
Meditating on God's Presence
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MEDITATING ON GOD'S PRESENCE
Joshua 1:1-19

If you have His Word, and I hope you do—maybe somebody around you does that you can look on with—let me invite you to open with me to Joshua 1. You're going to want to follow along so find somebody around you, if you don't have a Bible, who has one. Look around, share if need be, but Joshua 1. Feel free to use the table of contents to find that. It's the sixth book in the Bible. Joshua 1.

When I say the word "meditate", what is the first picture that comes to your mind? Maybe it's a man with a turban on his head, sitting upright, with legs crisscrossed, his arms raised, his eyes closed, maybe his lips humming. We often associate meditation with mysticism and for good reason. You think about Buddhism involving or even requiring meditation—this emptying of the mind in order to focus on the soul. As a result we as Christians virtually avoid the idea and functionally avoid the practice of meditation all together. And for good reason we know that meditation is not the way or even a way to salvation. But what are we to do then with texts like we're going to read where God commands Joshua, and by implication his people, to meditate? So God in His Word commands us to meditate. So to avoid meditation all together is to disobey God.

We need to meditate, which then leads to the follow up question: what does that mean? What is meditation? How do we do it? What I want to do tonight is, over the next few moments in a sense, to model meditation. I want us to take a short passage of Scripture—actually from our Bible reading today—and meditate on it. Now you may be wondering, "Okay what does that mean? Does that mean we're about to sit down on the floor and crisscross our legs, raise our arms, close our eyes? Because if so I'm out of here." Let me set your mind at ease, that's not what we're going to do.

Donald Whitney who has written some great resources on different spiritual disciplines defines biblical meditation this way. It says, "Meditation is deep thinking on the truths and spiritual realities revealed in Scripture for the purposes of understanding, application, and prayer." So right from the beginning you see, you hear the major difference here between mysticism and Christianity. It's not just about posture; it's about the goal. So the goal of eastern mysticism, or even new age meditation, is the emptying of your mind in order to have complete focus. But the goal in biblical meditation is totally different. Actually the goal would be the same—we want to have complete focus, but the means of accomplishing that goal is not meditation that empties our minds but meditation that fills our minds with truth, with God's Word. That's why in the passage we're about to read—you might go ahead and just look at it down in verse eight—the command God' s about to give us, verse eight says, "*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night."* So meditation involves filling our minds with God's Word and its in doing that that we find right focus for our lives.

This kind of focus necessitates more than just reading the Bible. So notice the command here in verse eight is not, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall *read* it day and night." Instead, "*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your*

mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night." So there's a difference between reading the Bible and meditating on the Bible. And it's clear we're not just supposed to read it; we're supposed to meditate on it day and night. I remember reading this passage this week and I'm thinking, "We need to know how to meditate because this is something we're supposed to do every single day and every night. This is huge." Meditation does not need to be a mystery to us. Meditation needs to be a reality in every one of our Christian lives on a daily basis, on a nightly basis, not just reading.

So here's how Donald Whitney, based on the different ways the Bible talks about reading and meditating on Scripture, distinguishes between the two. He writes, "Reading the Bible was never intended to be the primary means of absorbing the Bible. Reading is the starting place but meditation is the absorption of Scripture, and it's the absorption of Scripture that leads to the experiences with God and the changes in our lives that we seek when we come to the Bible." So it's one thing when he says to read Scripture, it's a whole other thing to absorb it. And absorbing it, that's meditation.

And it squares with how the Bible talks about meditation. There's actually three words in the Hebrew that are translated "meditate" in our Bibles. The first one used in Psalm 1, basically when it says "meditate" there it's talking about murmuring Scripture slowly and softly to yourself. Psalm 1 says, "*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers."* A.T. Scott, one of our elders, led our elders through this text this last Wednesday, a glorious time. Verse two says, "*But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night."* So he's murmuring it to himself over and over again; every day, every night.

The other two words for meditate in the Bible are actually a part of our Bible reading from this last weekend, Psalm 119. So Psalm 119:14 describes meditation as repeating God's Word, even musically, in a way that we delight in it—just this enjoyable picture. Then the other is Psalm 119:99 where the psalmist says, "*I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation."* And the word there for meditation is talking about reflecting quietly with deep devotion. So notice the difference here. Reading the Bible is good and it's necessary as a starting point for meditation but it's not where it stops because we don't just read the Bible like we're reading a novel for entertainment or a non-fiction book for information. No, as we read the Bible we want to absorb the Bible. We want to soak in what it's saying and that involves more than just following words on a page.

Do you ever find yourself doing that? Do you ever find yourself just kind of reading verses, words in Scripture? I do, especially when I'm using a Bible reading plan like we're using. I find myself just reading verse, after verse, after verse and then I'll stop and think, "I have no idea what I just read." Am I alone in this? Thanks. Help me out here! It's not because I don't understand it, it's because I'm just not even really listening to what I'm reading.

Husbands have you ever been on a date with your wife where—and this has never happened to me but I've heard… My wife and I try to regularly, consistently go out on dates and so every once in while we'll find ourselves at a restaurant for dinner, and we'll be seated in this restaurant in such a way that I'm sitting there across the table from my beautiful wife and she's sitting in front of me, but then right behind her in the background is this screen and there's often times a game on or Sports Center. I want to listen well to my wife but there are times—or so I've heard—there are times when in the middle of conversation with your wife there all of the sudden comes this pause and it hits you that apparently something has just been said that evokes a response and you have no idea what's just been said. Therefore you have no idea how to respond.

Now you know how the games going but you don't know what's just been said. And so you hear these dreaded words, and she says, "You haven't been listening to a thing I've been saying, have you?" To which I'll respond, "Well of course I have just that last part. Just repeat that last part. I just want to make sure I'm clear before I respond."

And we do that with the Word of God. We read it, I mean we generally are actually reading it, but we don't stop and let it soak in. We all do this. One more quote from Donald Whitney, he writes, "Most Christians read the Bible but few Christians meditate on it." And he goes on to diagnose it saying, "As a result so many sense little spiritual impact from the time they invest in Scripture intake. So the main reason more Christians don't find their daily time in the Scriptures more profitable has little to do with the strength of the memory, the level of their education, or their I.Q. Rather the problem is very simple: a lack of meditation on Scripture."

Has anybody been there? Is there maybe anybody there now? Maybe constantly there—reading the Bible but not experiencing God in it; not experiencing the spiritual impact from time spent listening to God. I am zealous for us—for you, for me—for us to experience God on a daily and nightly basis. I am zealous for us to know this spiritual impact that he's talking about. Not just to read God's Word and move on with our Bible reading, box checked off for the day, and then not to give up on Bible reading all together. I'm guessing some, maybe many of you, have done to this point because you weren't seeing the point. You weren't really experiencing the benefit. Maybe because you were reading but you weren't absorbing and it sure seems like something was missing. What I'm guessing is missing for many of us is meditation.

Now this is where I'm, as a pastor, both a bit encouraged and a bit discouraged. So let me explain—encouraged. On one hand I'm encouraged because the simple guide to reading the Bible that we've developed as a church and given to you that's online, it's on the Brook Hills app, that simple guide to reading the Bible is in essence a guide to meditation. If you take Donald Whitney's definition of meditation, and he said it was deep thinking on the truths and spiritual realities revealed in Scripture for the purposes of understanding application and prayer. You realize those three purposes—understanding, application, and prayer—are exactly what that simple guide is all about.

If you'll remember, or if you use that guide, it's based on an acrostic R.E.A.P. It's just read the text—so read but don't stop there. Examine in order to understand—first purpose that he points out to meditation. And then apply—the second purpose he points out. And then pray—the third purpose he points out. So if you're using that simple guide to reading the Bible that uses that acrostic R.E.A.P, whether you realize it or not, you are meditating on Scripture. If you're not using that you can download that online just really easily and tomorrow start using it. I would encourage you to use it, maybe for the first time, maybe for the first time in a long time. And as you do, know that you're obeying this command from God. If you have been using that guide be encouraged. Even though you may not realize it you're meditating on God's Word.

At the same time here's where I am a bit discouraged. So I've been—just to be vulnerable—personally and pastorally convicted this last week that the way I often teach us and lead us through the Word when we're together may not always lend very well to meditation. What I mean by that is that if I'm not careful I can lead us through a sermon where we study a passage in the Bible and we see all sorts of truth, but I don't leave time along the way to let that truth really soak into our minds and our hearts. I think about a sermon like last week where we walk through all of Deuteronomy revolving around four primary commands amidst a plethora of other commands, and all of those commands are good and true and we need

to see those commands and those truths. But if we're not careful, if I'm not careful, I'll end up trying to lead through a whole study, a whole sermon stocked full of truths so much to the point that I don't allow any time along the way to absorb that truth and let it soak in. And the result may be us getting a bunch of good notes on a sermon but then walking away without internalizing anything we've written down. That's actually dangerous, even deceptive.

James 1 says if you hear the Word and then walk away and don't even remember what you've heard then you deceive yourselves. Is it possible that we could be an extremely biblically literate congregation and yet be totally deceived in the process? I don't want us to walk away deceived every week because we've just read God's Word and seen truths. I want us to listen to God, to ponder God's Word, to meditate on it, to let it soak into our minds and our hearts in such a way that we're leaving ready to obey what He has said in our lives and as a church.

So here's what I want to do. I want to lead us to meditate on this passage of Scripture: Joshua 1:1-9. What we're going to do is we're going to read it slowly and deliberately so that the goal is not just to get through this part of the night so we can get into the sermon. No, we want to listen to God. We want to focus intently on what God is saying. So get your eyes off Sports Center, TV, whatever so to speak. So put distractions aside. Let's focus our mind on the Word of God. And then let's just absorb it. What we're going to do is we're going to step back and just let this passage soak in to our minds and our heats. There may be some notes you want to write down, some truths that I'll draw attention to, or maybe truths that I don't even cover that you observe in this text, but the goal is to meditate on it—to understand this passage, to apply this passage in our own situations, to pray according to it, and in the process to delight in it.

So let's ask God to help us do this. I know Corey just prayed but can I just… Let's bow our heads. I just want to lead us. Let's think about who we're bowing our heads before and who we're about to hear from.

Oh God, God we want to listen well to You, so we're praying, help us to listen well to You. As we read Your Word we pray that by the power of Your Spirit it would soak into minds and hearts in supernatural ways; God that You would keep us from distractions right now. God keep us from distractions. Help us to focus, to hear, to absorb. We pray for an experience with You. We pray for spiritual impact that comes in listening to the God of the universe. So we pray for Your help toward that end now. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Okay. Let's read the Word of God. Just hear it, focus on it. Don't tune out along the way. This is God's Word.

> *After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my*

> *servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*

Okay. When you read this passage deliberately there are immediately a couple of phrases that stick out, aren't there? There's two phrases that are repeated three times in these verses that we just read. So see one: one is a command. It's the command for Joshua to be strong and courageous. You see it in verse six—you might underline it in your Bible—"*Be strong and courageous*." Then verse seven: "*Only be strong and very courageous*." And then verse nine, "*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous."* So three times you see that command.

And then the other phrase that's repeated three times is a promise. It's the promise that God is going to be with Joshua. So you see it twice at the end of verse five. God says, "*Just as I was with Moses*"—here it is—"*so I will be with you*." That's a promise. "I will be with you." And then He says it again, but just rephrases it: "*I will not leave you or forsake you*." That's the second time. Then you go to the end of the passage—end of verse nine: "*Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go*." So three times He talks about being with him.

This is not the first time we've seen these phrases. If you've been following along in the Bible reading you know that these are the exact same phrases we read just a couple of chapters before this. In fact turn back to the left just a few chapters. You'll come to Deuteronomy 31. Look at Deuteronomy 31. If you're using that R.E.A.P—that simple guide to reading the Bible—first question in that examine section is going to be, "What words, or phrases, or verses seem to stick out in this passage?" So that's what we're doing right now. We're examining to understand this passage.

Look back in Deuteronomy 31 when Moses is speaking to Joshua and the people of God. Look at Deuteronomy 31:1:

> *So Moses continued to speak these words to all Israel. And he said to them, "I am 120 years old today. I am no longer able to go out and come in. The LORD has said to me, 'You shall not go over this Jordan.' The LORD your God himself will go over before you. He will destroy these nations before you, so that you shall dispossess them, and Joshua will go over at your head, as the LORD has spoken. And the LORD will do to them as he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when he destroyed them. And the LORD will give them over to you, and you shall do to them according to the whole commandment that I have commanded you. (*So listen to what He says in verse six, you might underline it*.) Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."*

Same command, same promise there. Then in verse seven Moses speaks directly to Joshua. You'll never guess what he says to him.

> *Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the*

> *LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it. It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."*

Sound familiar? And then you even get later in the chapter, Deuteronomy 31:23. God speaks directly to Joshua in verse 23 and the Bible says, *"And the LORD commissioned Joshua the son of Nun and said, 'Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the people of Israel into the land that I swore to give them. I will be with you.'"* When we see something repeated like this in the Bible it's obvious we need to sit up and take notice.

Now I didn't even point out, you go back to Joshua 1, at the end of that chapter which we didn't read all the way there, but the people there are speaking to Joshua and you'll never guess what they say. They want in on the action. Verse 16 says:

> *And they answered Joshua, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only may the LORD your God be with you, as he was with Moses!"*

Same thing there and in verse 18: "*Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death. Only* [Joshua, this is how the chapter ends] *be strong and courageous."* So there's a promise here. God will be with Joshua. And there's a command that flows from that reality. So in light of God's presence, be strong and be courageous. That is what I want us to meditate on for a few moments.

How does God's presence with the Christian create strength and courage in the Christian? I want us to just think about this. Let this soak in. Absorb this. Not just to think about this in Joshua's life… So yes we want to understand what's going on in his life, but we want to soak this into our own lives. Christian, what affect does knowing God is with you have upon you? That's what I've found myself meditating on in my life this last week, even with some things that I'm walking through in my life. Reading Deuteronomy 31 a few days ago, then Joshua 1 today, here's what I'm soaking in. Obviously I don't know all that each of you are walking through in your own lives but I've got a feeling that what we just read has a lot of room to soak into lives and families all across this faith family.

Now I prayed this morning—a group of our pastors get together every Sunday morning and pray—and one of the things we were praying was that God would bring people that need to hear this Word, that need to soak in this Word in particular. After the 9:00 gathering a man comes up to me right afterwards and he says, "Pastor, what's your name?" He had no clue what my name was. He said, "I am not supposed to be here today. I was planning on going to another church. I couldn't find the church that I was planning on going to and so I saw this one and so I just pulled in. It was a little bit late so I walked in, the sermon had already started but I thought, 'Oh I'll just sit down.'" And then tears just start flowing from this man's eyes as he says, "You don't understand what I'm walking through in my life and I needed to hear this Word today." So I just don't think that's a coincidence.

Similarly I don't think it's a coincidence that any one person is listening at this moment. If you were looking for somewhere else we're glad you're here. If you were planning to come here I'm trusting that there's a reason you're planning to come here. So can you just soak this in for the next few moments? Just listen to God and His Word speaking to your life.

When God Is With You …

You have confidence amidst uncertainty.
Christian, think about what we just read means. Meditate on it. When God is with you, you have confidence amidst uncertainty. You might even personalize it: "When God is with me." So this is just soaking into your life. "When God is with me I have confidence amidst uncertainty." Just think about this. If you're reading through the Bible, you know the context that leads up to Joshua 1. In the chapter right before this in the Bible, Deuteronomy 34, a monumental event in Israel's history happens: Moses dies. Moses—the man who had led the people of God ever since the beginning of the book of Exodus…the last four books of the Bible, four out of five books in the Bible, we've seen Moses as the main leader among God's people, and now he's gone. Here stand God's people on the brink of the promise land and their leader is dead. You can only imagine the uncertainty. What are the people going to do without Moses? Sure Joshua had been appointed as Moses' successor but there was so much unknown about how he would lead and what would happen.

So in the after math of Moses' death uncertainty is in the air among the people, among their leader. So don't you love verse one? *"After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua…"* And here from the start of this book we're reminded that Moses was only a servant of the Lord and the Lord was still with His people. The Lord, who goes on in verse 5 to say to Joshua, *"Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you."* So the man who leads God's people is not ultimately what matters. Ultimately what matters is the Lord who leads His people. And when He is with His people they can have confidence amidst uncertainty.

So let this soak in. Certainly there is corporate application here. It is always good to remember that we, as God's people called The Church at Brook Hills, are not dependent on one leader or even one group of leaders. This text is a clarion call to remember that the church is not dependent on one pastor. This church is not dependent on me or any other pastor for that matter. Our certainty is not dependent on a particular leader, but on the Lord who guides His people with His presence. So there's corporate application here.

But then apply this in your own life, your own family, your own works. Uncertainty often hits when someone we have looked to in our lives is no longer there, right? Maybe it's a husband or a wife who was once there but is no longer there. Maybe it's a mom or a dad who was once there but is no longer there. Mark Sly, our student minster, got a call on Wednesday night this week as his students were finishing up that his dad had just passed away. It reminded me of 10 years ago this August when I got a similar call. When things like that happen in our lives, and our families, at work and church, all of a sudden we find ourselves in a cloud of uncertainty. Into that cloud God speaks to His people with crystal clear clarity. He says, "I am still with you."

Would you just meditate on that? Just let that soak in. Maybe it's uncertainty that you're facing, not because of the death of somebody you love or the distance now from someone you once loved, maybe because of something unexpected or unforeseen that has happened or is happening in your life that's caused all kinds of questions just to come into the air. Would you just hear God saying in the middle of uncertainty around you, "I am with you and you can be confident in me"? God says, "Don't put your confidence in your circumstances. Don't put your confidence in this person or that person." God says, "Put your confidence in my presence with you." When God is with you, you have confidence amidst uncertainty.

You have strength despite weakness.
Then keep going. Second: when God is with you, you have strength despite weakness. When God is with me I have strength despite weakness. Verse five: "*Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you,* [Joshua]*. I will not leave you or forsake you.* [So] *be strong."* When God is with you, you have strength despite your weakness.

Joshua needed strength in his weakness. You remember Joshua tried to lead the people of God before. We don't have time to turn there right now, but you go back to Numbers 13, which we've read. Remember that Joshua and Caleb 40 years prior to this had gone into the Promised Land as two of the twelve spies sent by Moses to scout out that land. When the spies came back the spies were saying, "This land is flowing with milk and honey. It's plentiful. It's a great land." But then ten of the spies say, "We can't take it because the people there are big, and they're large, and they're powerful and we'll never be able to take them." And Caleb and Joshua are standing up and saying, "Yes we can! God's given us this land." In Numbers 14 Joshua specifically rises to speak and he tells the people, "We can take this land." You know how the people respond to Joshua in Numbers 14? The Bible says they rose up to stone him.

Now obviously by this point in Joshua 1 that entire generation had passed away but the memory of that kind of event in a leaders life does not pass away so easily. Joshua knows that leading this people will not be easy. It will be hard. Joshua knows that left to his own abilities to lead this people he will fail. He can't do it, and so God says to him, "I am with you and in light of this, even though you know you are weak, with me you are strong." This is good news, isn't it? This is worth meditating on.

Anybody feel in over your head in your life, in your relationships? You feel in over your head in your marriage? You ever feel in over your head in parenting? Can I just testify to that one? Totally in over my head. Are you feeling in over your head at work? In this or that situation maybe; emotional difficulty you're facing? Maybe physical challenge you're encountering, maybe relational strain you're walking through and you don't know what to do. Maybe the only thing you do know to do is extremely hard to do. So to Christian men and women, and husbands and wives, and moms and dads, and employees and employers facing all kinds of situations let this soak in: God is with you and He gives you strength despite your weakness.

You have courage in the face of fear.
To keep going: you have courage in the face of fear. So we're just meditating on God's presence. When God is with you, you have courage in the face of fear. Think about this: why did God tell Joshua three different times to be strong and courageous? The implied answer in the text is obvious. God told Joshua three times to be strong and courageous because Joshua was scared to death. He's looking at the land of Canaan, currently divided into 31 different city-states, and he's supposed to lead God's people to conquer all of them? How's he going to do that? Starting with this major city of Jericho surrounded by massive walls around it. There is much, much to be afraid of here. God says, "I am with you so don't be afraid."

Then hear what God says to him next. Look at verse six. It says, "*I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them."* Now that's good news if you're Joshua. That's God saying, "You're going to cause this people to inherit this land that I swore a long time ago to give them." God just said back up in verse three… Listen to this verse. Verse three: "*Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses*." Did you hear that? "Every place that your foot steps will be yours."

Verse four: "*From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory."* That's a guarantee from Almighty God and that's reason for courage in the face of fear. Do you realize what's going on here? Joshua hasn't even fought one battle in the Promised Land and God has already guaranteed him the victory.

Don't miss it. When the God—the one true God, the only God who is sovereign over all peoples and all nations in all the universe—when this God is with you, you have no reason to fear. I don't know what you're facing right now in your life that makes you afraid, but I do know that when the God who spoke and all creation came into being, the God who reigns over all creation and all nations, He holds them in the palm of His hands, when this God is on your side you have nothing to be afraid of. You have nothing to be afraid of. You have courage in the face of fear.

You have success according to Scripture.
Now this courage is obviously based not just on God's presence but on God's promise here which leads to the next reality. So when God's with you, you have confidence amidst uncertainty, strength despite weakness, courage in the face of fear, and when God is with you, you have success according to Scripture. Notice how everything here in this text hinges on God's Word to Joshua, God's Word to His people, which is why in verse seven—look at it—God says:

> *Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.*

Success here is tied to obedience, right? Verse eight:

> *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*

"You will have success," God says, "when you meditate on My Word and you do what I have commanded there." It's so interesting the way this plays out in the coming pages. You'll see it as you read this week. Israel's military success in the book of Joshua is never based on how strong their army is or how innovative their strategy is. Human strength, human strategy, have nothing to do with whether or not the Israelites win different battles. Instead their battles are totally tied to whether or not these Israelites are obeying God. When they're walking in obedience to God's Word they can win a battle with nothing but trumpet players and people shouting. Yet, on the other hand, when they're not walking in obedience to God's Word they can't defeat even the smallest, puny town of Ai even with their strongest men.

So notice this, all that we're talking about here—confidence, strength, courage, success—all these things hinge on trusting in God's presence and clinging to God's Word. So just let that soak in. Whatever you're walking through in your life right now, whatever circumstances you're facing, whatever decisions you're making, notice here in Joshua 1 that God doesn't spell out the battle plans for each of these places they're going to conquer. God doesn't give the specifics at this point for what to do on this day or that day, in this city or that battle. Instead God says, "Stay in tune with my voice. Listen to my Word. Hear it and heed it and you will have success."

You may not know the specifics at this moment of what you need to do in this circumstance or that situation, and you may not know the details about the decision you need to make, but know this Christian: God is with you and God is not silent. He leads His people according to His Word. He does not leave His people in the dark regarding His will and He will give us success according to Scripture. So cling to His Word. Read it but don't stop there. Meditate on it, soak in it day and night, day and night, day and night and He will give you success according to Scripture.

You have hope in the face of despair.
Last reality, just let it soak in: when God is with you, you have hope in the face of despair. This passage closes out in verse nine with God saying, "*Have I not commanded you?* (Just in case you missed it) *Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed."* Don't be dismayed. Don't be discouraged or disheartened, downcast, distressed. Don't let your heart give way to despair because the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Whenever you get to a point where it seems like there's no way out, whenever you find yourself in a valley where it seems like nothing but darkness is surrounding you, whenever you begin to wonder if there is any way forward at all, know this, Christian, know this: you have hope. You have hope. I am convinced that God's wants some people to hear these three words loud and clear. Just let it soak in. You have hope. You have hope.

Why? Not because your circumstances are guaranteed to change tonight and not because the situation you're facing is guaranteed to turn around tomorrow. No, your hope is not in your circumstances or your situation. Your hope, the hope of your heart is in the rock solid reality that the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. So don't be dismayed. Don't be dismayed.

You may remember back in Numbers 13 when Moses sent these twelve spies out into the land. He gives the names of these twelve spies. But when Joshua's name is mentioned he's not called Joshua initially. In Numbers 13:8 he's called Hoshea, the son of Nun. It's not until you get to verse 16 in that chapter that you read, "*These were the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun Joshua."* This is where we learn that Hoshea's name was actually changed by Moses to Joshua. You may wonder why. What's the difference between the two names? Glad you asked.

The answer is Hoshea means "deliverance or salvation." But Moses makes a slight but significant change at the beginning of this name when he changes it to Joshua. So now it doesn't just mean "deliverance or salvation" but now it means "Yahweh delivers" or "Yahweh saves." In other words "the Lord delivers", "the Lord saves". It's the first name we see given in the Bible that explicitly incorporates the Lord—Yahweh—into someone's name and it's deliberate. For when we come to this book that bares the name of Joshua, the overall message of the book of Joshua is clear: the Lord delivers His people. The Lord saves His people. Because of Yahweh's presence, because of the Lord's presence with His people they can have hope in the face of despair. He will deliver them. He will save them. God delivers, God saves His people. That's why you know you can have hope when He is with you.

If that slight change of name in the Old Testament is not cool enough in and of itself, you know how that Hebrew name Joshua is translated when you get to the New Testament in the Greek? Joshua is translated in the New Testament as Jesus, for in the Greek New Testament it's the name of Jesus that translates "the Lord saves", "the Lord delivers". So don't miss this. All this talk about God's presence with His people was foreshadowing a day when God would come literally to dwell in flesh among His people. Jesus—"the Lord who saves"—would come to the earth as a man, the perfect presence of God dwelling with and

among His people; dwelling with and among a people who were separated from God's presence. This is the human condition.

This is the story of all of our lives. This is the story of the world around us. We have all sinned against God, we've turned away from God, and we have separated ourselves from God. This is the ultimate explanation for all that is wrong in our lives and all that is wrong in the world around us. We and the world we live in have turned away from God and the effects of our turning from Him are all around us. And the ultimate need we all have is to be reconciled to God, to be restored to God's presence. The good news of the Bible is that Jesus came to make that possible. Jesus came to live the life we couldn't live; a life perfect fellowship with, and total obedience to God. He did not deserve as a result the payment of sin, death and separation from God and yet He chose on our behalf to stand in our place, to take our payment, to experience death and undergo separation from God. This is why on the cross we hear Him crying out, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me*?" This is Jesus experiencing God forsakenness, separation from the Father, in order that we might experience God's forgiveness—reconciliation with the Father.

Jesus stood in our place on a cross, willingly suffered our separation for our sin and in so doing purchased our reconciliation to God. In His unique life, in His substitutionary death, and in His victorious resurrection over sin and death Jesus has made it possible for you and I to be restored to the presence of God. This is why I have been intentional all along to apply these promises from Joshua 1 to Christians, because it's only through Christ, and through faith and trust in who He is, and what He has done that these promises can be a reality in our lives. Apart from God we are separated from God in our sin. We have no reason apart from Christ for the confidence, and strength, and courage, and success and hope that we have seen in Joshua. It's only through trust in the One who saves, in the One who delivers, through Christ, that these promises become a reality for you and for me.

So I invite you, non-Christian friend, to realize that apart from Christ you are separated from God in your sin but God has made a way for you to be restored to Him. He has sent His Son to die on a cross, to suffer your separation in order to purchase the possibility of your reconciliation. When you turn from your sin and trust in Jesus you can be restored to God right where you are by faith in Him.

I've talked about, not a coincidence, a woman today from Kazakhstan here who works in ministry in Kazakhstan brought a friend of hers who is from Ukraine who is not a follower of Christ. The whole message she's translating to this friend from Ukraine and at the end of our time together earlier the friend from Ukraine puts her faith in Christ for salvation. God desires to bring you to Himself, not based on your works, not based on how many good things you can do, but based on trust in what He has done for you.

When you put your trust in Him, when you are reconciled, restored to God, just consider what these promises mean for your life right now. You realize all these promises are yours in Christ, even in greater ways. Now you were separated from God, on your own, amidst the wind and the waves of this world, tossed back and forth, back and forth, without certainty, without strength and courage, not knowing what lies ahead.

But here's the deal: something radical happens. And I don't say radical just to say radical. Like something radical happens when you put your faith and your hope in Christ because these promises in the Old Testament—yes, and in the New Testament we get there and we see and we'll say at the end of our time together, Jesus is saying, "I'm with you always"—but it goes even deeper because the picture in the New Testament is not just God with us.

What does Colossians 1:27 say? This is the mystery of the gospel: Christ in You, the hope of glory.

So picture the Spirit of Christ who raised Jesus from the dead comes to live inside of you. So Ephesians 1 says He's a deposit in you, guaranteeing your eternal redemption. So you are sealed with the Spirit of Christ inside of you. So just meditate on this; let this soak in right where you are, Christian. You put your faith in Christ, even this woman this morning from Ukraine, she puts her faith in Christ, in that moment the Spirit of Christ comes to dwell inside of her. You have the Spirit of God living in you. Right where you are, He's indwelling you. God's Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, living in you.

That's not the end of the story because Scripture also talks about not just how Christ is in us but how we are in Christ as Christians. Second Corinthians 5:17: "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*" So let's bring Christ into the picture. You're in Christ, you're sealed, new creation, old gone, new come. Things are looking pretty good.

But then it gets even better because Colossians 3 goes on to talk about how since we have died to ourselves we are now hidden with Christ. Anybody know how the verse ends? We're hidden with Christ in God. So now the Spirit of Christ is in you, you are in Christ, and Christ is in God. Just let this soak in.

I don't know what you're walking through in your life right now. I don't know what situations you are facing. I don't know what the devil and all his demons are throwing at you right now but I do know this, Christian: when the devil comes to try to get at you he's got a lot of work to do. He comes first face to face with God, which he doesn't have a very good track record in coming face to face with God. Then if for some reason he were able to get past God the Father he would come face to face with Christ. And we know how that works out. The devil thought he had defeated Christ when He died. Three days later though, stone rolled away. Jesus Christ rose from the dead, conquering sin, death, and Satan. In the words of Genesis 3, He crushed the serpent's head. So that didn't work out well for him.

Then if for some reason he were able to get past God the Father and God the Son, when he gets to you he's still got to deal with the Spirit of Christ who sealed your heart for eternity. The Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead living inside of you. So when you put this together and you realize where you stand right now, I'd say you're pretty secure. I'd say you're pretty secure.

A.W. Tozer—I came across this quote—he said, "I am not afraid of the devil. The devil can handle me." Tozer said, "He's got judo I've never heard of." What is Tozer talking about? Judo? "But he can't handle the One to whom I am joined. He can't handle the one to whom I am united. He can't handle the One whose nature dwells in my nature." Hudson Taylor said, "Oh it is joy to feel Jesus living in you. He's my life, my strength, my salvation. I'm no longer anxious about anything." "I'm not anxious about anything." Don't you want that? Not to be anxious about anything.

Taylor says this in his biography called "Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret", he said, "I know He is able to carry out His will and His will is mine. It makes no matter where He places me or how. That is rather for Him to consider than for me for in the easiest position He must give me His grace and in the most difficult His grace will be sufficient. So if God should place me in great perplexity, must He not give me much guidance? In positions of great difficulty, much grace; in circumstances of great pressure and trial, much strength. I have no fear

that His resources will be unequaled to the emergency, and His resources are mine for He is mine, and He is with me, and He dwells in me."

Christian, just let it soak in. Just see yourself and just let it soak in. Amidst uncertainty you have confidence. Despite your weakness, you have strength. In the face of fear you have nothing to be afraid of. You have courage. He will grant you success according to His Word. He gives you hope even the deepest, darkest, most difficult circumstances. He's with you. Don't be afraid. Don't be dismayed. The Lord your God is with you, in you, you in Him, wherever you go. This is a blood bought reality for every follower of Christ. I just invite you to receive it, and soak it in, and to hear it, and let it apply to whatever you're walking through.

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